

Letter

T O T H E E D I T O R

Another Name For Madness

Marion Roach captures the nightmarish quality of life peculiar to Alzheimer's disease victims and their families ("Another Name for Madness," Jan. 16). Ironically, the ability to diagnose Alzheimer's disease, to understand it in a limited sense and to predict its course has apparently not removed the stigma often associated with misunderstood mental disorders.

Fourteen years ago, when my mother developed the symptoms of senile dementia at age 60, there was a popular myth that academically and professionally accomplished people did not exhibit evidence of intellectual impairment, so that at first my cries of alarm were ignored. Later, her friends censured me for not providing her with enough attention and demonstrations of love and concern. They criticized my mother for failing to participate in athletic activities and neglecting to consume an enriched diet. Accusations flew and filled the void created by ignorance of this brain disorder.

For years, I did battle with a nameless adversary, and although I do not wish to suggest that Miss Roach's struggle is an easy one, I do envy her the knowledge of her opponent, the support groups now available and the lawyers and doctors ready to help her plot a realistic and strategic course in the years ahead.

MARJORIE S. SCHKOLNICK
Princeton, N.J.

In the late 1960's, my husband was the recipient of the American Society of Civil Engineers' award for outstanding achievement. He had designed the Kennedy Center, in Washington. In September 1979, he stood before the kitchen clock and begged me to teach him how to tell time. In October 1979, he was diagnosed as having Alzheimer's disease.

Through personal experience, I have learned that a



constructive approach is not only helpful, but mandatory. In regard to home care, colleges and universities might prove to be an untapped source of skilled attendants. If students in the fields of psychology, sociology and other related skills were to be awarded academic credit for hours spent in the service of Alzheimer's patients, whether at home or in day-care centers, such worthwhile ventures could provide valuable learning experiences for the students while granting much-needed leisure time to family members.

In short, Alzheimer's disease cannot be combated without a communal effort, one which involves not only the medical profession but also the concerted resources of the community.

JOAN A. CONLIN
Noroton, Conn.

In response to the article on Alzheimer's disease, in which I was quoted, I feel I have to make my position clear. I do not share the sense of hopelessness that Miss Roach communicated. Research on Alzheimer's disease has made major advances in the last few years. The new techniques of molecular and neurobiology offer exciting new

tools with which to attack the roots of this disease, and those of us involved in this work feel strongly that a concerted effort will allow us to understand the cause of Alzheimer's disease in the not too distant future.

PETER DAVIES
Rye, N.Y.

The adult day-care center is an alternative to institutionalization for people who are no longer able to live independently. There are hundreds of these centers around the country and the majority of people in these centers suffer from Alzheimer's disease. Here, the Alzheimer's patient can receive professional counseling, hot meals, medical guidance, therapy, mental stimulation and physical exercise.

NANCY D. DEZAN
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Marion Roach's article is enormously helpful in its medical information about Alzheimer's disease, but what I shall not forget is the personal anguish: the cats being destroyed at the vet's, the burglar alarm's mangled wires, her mother's writing "Merry Christmas" in the doctor's office and — because I, too, am the mother of two redheads — the end of the game called "another redhead."

SUSAN H. TUCK
Bloomington, Ind.

Marion Roach refers to the discouraging state of medical research on Alzheimer's disease. Part of the difficulty we face is that multiple factors, genetic and environmental, appear to play a role. It may be that an interplay of the two determines who will be affected and when.

At the National Institutes of Health, we are involved in the study of twins, one or both of whom have Alzheimer's disease. Given sufficient numbers of both identical and fraternal twin pairs, we should be able to determine a num-

ber of these factors, whether environmental or genetic.

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If Alzheimer's disease is detected early, patients may be helped by memory training, which can be taught by any speech therapist. Although this does not reverse the process of the disease itself, it may slow down the progress of memory loss and help patients to cope better.

HESKEL M. HADDAD,
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The C.I.A.'s Covert Operations

Philip Taubman's article "Casey and His C.I.A. on the Rebound" (Jan. 16) seems to assume that covert operations abroad by the United States Government are inherently evil. Some covert actions may be stupid, ineffective and even immoral, but those designed to protect the security of the United States and its allies can be wise, effective and morally justifiable.

C.I.A. covert activity should be assessed by the three principal criteria of the classic Christian just-war doctrine: (1) Is the end just? (2) Are the means just and proportionate? (3) If the action succeeds, will the chances for justice and freedom be enhanced?

So judged, many United States covert activities have been wise and right.

ERNEST W. LEFEVER
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What troubles me most are covert operations. Mr. Taubman writes: "The Reagan Administration considers covert operations a routine instrument for foreign policy," and notes, "Casey's enthusiasm for covert operations."

To the contrary, I feel deeply such operations are illegal under international law and United Nations agreements. The United States I owe allegiance to does not engage in such totalitarian techniques.

SAVI CLOUGH
Newburgh, N.Y.

Philip Taubman incorrectly reported that the "C.I.A., with assistance from the Turkish Government, has provided millions of dollars' worth of arms and weapons to two Iranian paramilitary groups in eastern Turkey that oppose the Khomeini Government in Teheran."

The Turkish Government neither supports nor permits any activities on its soil by expatriate Iranian paramilitary groups. Nor would the Turkish Government tolerate the formation of such groups.

Turkish foreign policy is based on the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of neighboring — indeed, of all — sovereign states.

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